

# How can social services help?

If you're deaf or have a hearing loss, you may be entitled to equipment and support from social services. This factsheet explains how your needs will be assessed and what help may be available.

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## What does a social services department do?

Your local authority's social services department provides social care services (also known as community care services) for people who have difficulties carrying out day-to-day tasks, and their family or carers. You might know your local authority as a 'unitary authority', 'county council', 'metropolitan borough council' or 'London borough council', depending on where you live.

### Who can get help from social services?

Social services support many different groups of people with particular needs, including:

- people who are disabled, including those who are deaf or have hearing loss
- children in need or at risk
- older people
- people living in poverty
- people with learning disabilities
- people with mental-health conditions or other health problems
- relatives and carers of those listed above.

### What type of support is provided?

Social care services can include:

- support from a specialist social worker
- aids or equipment
- help at home
- residential care in a care home
- community support and activities
- health care
- financial support
- information and advisory services, and advocacy
- respite care.

## What services are available for people who are deaf or have hearing loss?

Social care services for people who are deaf or have hearing loss aim to support individuals to lead independent, healthy lives, and to be active within their communities.


The services available vary across the country, depending on local policies and resources, but they may include:

- help and advice from specialist social workers
- specialist equipment (see below)
- signing classes for families
- funding for local lipreading classes
- support groups for people with hearing loss
- occupational therapy
- interpreters
- support from people who can act as advocates
- counselling
- help with developing communication skills and ways of coping with situations.

### What equipment might be available?

If you are deaf or have a hearing loss, you may qualify for equipment such as:

- **listening equipment**, such as a personal listener or hearing loop system for the home, which can help you hear the sounds you want to listen to more clearly
- **alerting devices**, such as flashing and/or vibrating alarms and doorbells, which can help you keep your independence at home
- an **amplified telephone** or **textphone**.

 To find out more about equipment that can help with hearing loss, see our **Equipment** range of factsheets.

## How can I find out what's available where I live?

To find out which social care services are available in your area, get in touch with your local social services department. You can find the contact details in your local telephone directory under the name of your local authority, or by searching online.

## Do I need to register as deaf or hard of hearing to get help?

No. In England, people who are deaf or have hearing loss can register with their local social services department. This is voluntary and many people don't register.


You can't be refused help from social services just because you're not on the register. But registering may entitle you to additional concessions, such as a Disabled Person's Railcard, and the local authority uses the information from its disability registers when planning what services to provide.

To apply to go on the register, contact your local social services department.

### Extra support at home

If you need support to help you maintain your home – for example, help with completing housing forms, or the provision of a warden or an alarm service – you might be able to get it from the government's Supporting People programme. This is separate from any help from social services.

If you need major adaptations to your home because of your disability, you can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant to help with the cost. Your local authority might carry out minor adaptations to your home for free.

 Contact your local authority to find out more about these options.

## Will I have to pay for social care services?


That depends on the service, your local authority and your financial situation. You normally don't have to pay for any equipment – social services will lend it to you. However, you might have to pay for, or contribute towards the cost of, other services such as home care, respite care and residential care.

Your local authority may want to look at your income (including benefits) and capital (such as property) when calculating whether you have to pay anything for social care services.

The system of charging for residential care is based on national guidance in England. Local authorities aren't required to charge for non-residential care – but if they do, they must follow legal guidance.

If you're on Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), Universal Credit or Pension Credit, non-residential services will be free.

If you disagree with social service's assessment of your finances, you can challenge the decision (see 'How do I make a complaint?', page 5).

 Contact your social services department to find out more about how they charge for services.

## How do I apply for help?

If you feel you need support from social services, you'll need to have a **health and social care assessment**. A social worker will usually visit you in your home to carry out the assessment. This is so they can work out whether you qualify for help – and, if so, which services will best meet your needs.

To arrange the assessment, get in touch with your local social services department, or have someone do this on your behalf. Or, you can apply for the assessment online at [www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services](http://www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services)

Let social services know in advance if you need communication support for the appointment – for example, a British Sign Language interpreter – and they will arrange it.

There are no national rules setting out how quickly you must have your assessment, but local authorities should publish their estimated timescales, which you can ask for.

### Should I prepare for my assessment?

Yes. It's a good idea to keep a diary for a week or more before the assessment, where you note down your daily needs and the difficulties – for example, with communication – that you face. Keep a record of what you do, how long it takes, and what help you receive, as well as what you'd like to do if you had the help.

You might also find it helpful to ask a relative, friend or local support group to help you prepare.

### How will I be assessed?

The social worker will look at your living circumstances, care needs and communication needs to determine whether your level of need is either critical, substantial, moderate or low.

Most local authorities will only consider you eligible for help if you have critical or substantial needs, so it's important that you think about and give the social worker a full account of:

- what sort of help you feel you need and why – for example, equipment to help you maintain your independence
- how often you need help – for example, how many times a day do you need a friend or relative to explain things you've not heard?
- what you would like to do if you had support to let you do it – are there any leisure or other activities that you might want to take up?
- what the potential risks of you not getting the support you need are – for example, you may become socially isolated.

The social worker will then assess the possible

and potential risks to your independence, and decide whether or not you qualify for social care services.

**i** Ask your social services department for more information on the criteria they use when deciding who qualifies for services.

### Do you have a carer?

Your carer can ask for their own needs to be assessed when your care needs are being assessed or reassessed. A carer is anyone who helps to look after another person – for example, your partner, a relative or friend.

If you are caring for someone else, you can ask both for their care needs and your own to be assessed. Social services must take account of the ability of the carer to continue to provide care on a regular basis and whether the carer needs support in their caring role.

**i** For more information, contact Carers UK (see page 6 for contact details).

### What happens if I qualify for help?

If you qualify for social care services, and your local authority agrees to pay for some or all of the services, it should offer you the choice of receiving the money by way of a personal budget or direct payment. These payment options aren't currently available if you're in residential care, but this is expected to change in the near future.

### What is a personal budget?

This is the amount of money your local authority allocates for your care. You can tell social services how to spend your personal budget on your behalf, or you can receive it as a direct payment to pay for services yourself (see overleaf). If you prefer, you could ask social services to give your personal budget to a separate organisation

(such as a user-controlled trust) that will spend the money on your care as you see fit.

Your social services department should provide you with information about the different options you can choose from to manage your personal budget.

### What is a direct payment?

Direct payments give you more choice and control over the social care services you receive. You are given a sum of money to spend on your own care each year. For example, you could employ your own care workers or buy your own equipment.

Direct payments also mean that if you're unhappy with the care services you're getting, you can decide to change who gives you the services without going through your local authority. However, with this control of the budget comes the responsibility of accounting for how it is spent. You'll also have significant responsibilities as an employer if you decide to hire a personal assistant.

If you prefer, you can get a mixture of care services, having some directly arranged by your local authority and arranging others yourself through direct payments.

If you choose to receive direct payments to provide your own care, your social services department must provide you with support to help you manage the payments.

### How do I make a complaint?

If you're unhappy with the service you've received from social services, you have the right to complain.

You may be unhappy if:

- your social services department decided that your needs don't meet the criteria for any of the services they provide
- you received a service that you don't think is adequate to meet your needs

- you have been re-assessed as no longer requiring a service that you have been using, either because your needs have changed or because the eligibility criteria have been altered.

Social services departments, and any organisations working on their behalf, should provide clear information about how you can make a complaint.

When you complain, social services must acknowledge your complaint within a timescale that they should make clear and readily available through their complaints policy and procedure.

On acknowledging your complaint, which they can do verbally or in writing, social services must discuss with you how the complaint will be handled and when you'll receive a written response that indicates the outcome.

Social services have a maximum of six months to respond to the complaint. However, if you're promised an earlier response in your initial discussions, you should be kept informed of any delays.

If you're unhappy with the result of your complaint, you can take your complaint directly to the Local Government Ombudsman's office (see page 6 for contact details). You can also contact your local MP or seek legal advice.

### Help shape social care services in your area

Social services departments have to consult with members of their local communities, including people who are deaf or have hearing loss, about the services they provide.

Getting involved in these consultations will give you the chance to say what's important to you, explain where there are gaps in the services provided and suggest how to make improvements.

To have your say, contact the director of social services in your area.

## Where can I get further information?

### Action on Hearing Loss

We offer a wide range of free information on many aspects of hearing loss. Our leaflets provide introductory information, while our factsheets go into more detail.

You may be interested in the other factsheets in our **Benefits** range, which cover Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Employment and Support Allowance, and more.

For further details, and to order free copies, contact our Information Line (see last page). You can also download our publications for free at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/factsheets)

### References

All of our factsheets are based on up-to-date research and information. If you'd like a list of references for this factsheet, please email us at [references@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:references@hearingloss.org.uk)

### Other organisations

#### Age UK

Produces a range of factsheets about social services for older people.

Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square,  
London WC1H 9NA

Telephone **0800 169 6565**  
Online contact form: [www.ageuk.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/contact-us)  
[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

#### Carers UK

Provides information and advice on benefits, services and other support available to carers.

20 Great Dover Street, London SE1 4LX

Telephone **0808 808 7777**  
[adviceline@carersuk.org](mailto:adviceline@carersuk.org)  
[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

#### Citizens Advice

Provides free advice and information to help people resolve legal, financial and other problems – look in your phonebook for your nearest bureau or do an online search.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) (England and Wales)  
[www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk) (Scotland)  
[www.citizensadvice.co.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.co.uk) (Northern Ireland)

Alternatively, you can use the Citizens Advice online advice guide at [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

#### Disability Rights UK

Provides a range of information about benefits, including free factsheets and the *Disability Rights Handbook*.

Ground Floor, CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road,  
London N1 6AH

Telephone **020 7250 8181**  
[enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org)  
[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

### Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Disability Rights UK for helping us to produce and review this factsheet.

#### Gov.uk

Provides online government information about benefits and public services. You can also find details of your local Jobcentre Plus office.

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

#### Local Government Ombudsman

Investigates complaints about local authorities and other organisations. Also provides advice and information about how to make a complaint.

PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH

Telephone **0300 061 0614**  
Fax **024 7682 0001**  
[www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

## Shop for hearing loss products

Our *Products* catalogue features the latest products and technology to help with hearing loss and tinnitus.

**Order the catalogue free today!**

Telephone **01733 361199**

Textphone **01733 238020**

Email **solutions@hearingloss.org.uk**

Or **shop online** at

**[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop)**



### National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

Supports children, young people and their families in overcoming the challenges of childhood deafness.

Ground Floor South, Castle House,  
37-45 Paul Street, London EC2A 4LS

Tel/textphone **0808 800 8880**

Fax **020 7251 5020**

**helpline@ndcs.org.uk**

**www.ndcs.org.uk**

### NI Direct

Provides online information about benefits and public services in Northern Ireland.

**www.nidirect.gov.uk**

### Turn2us

Helps people in financial need to access welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help.

Telephone **0808 802 2000**

Fax **01443 827616**

**info@turn2us.org.uk**

**www.turn2us.org.uk**

'Find an adviser' search tool:

**<http://advicefinder.turn2us.org.uk>**

## We welcome your feedback

If you have any comments or suggestions relating to this factsheet, or if you're interested in joining our Readers' Review Panel, we'd love to hear from you. Your feedback will help us to improve our information.

Please email us at **reviewpanel@hearingloss.org.uk** or write to Information and Publications, Action on Hearing Loss, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL.

### Please help us support others

We provide our leaflets, factsheets and Information Line service free of charge to anyone affected by hearing loss or tinnitus in the UK, but we rely on the generosity of our supporters to help us to do this. We'd be very grateful if you would consider making a donation today – of as little or as much as you can afford.

You can send a cheque/PO made payable to Action on Hearing Loss to: Action on Hearing Loss, FREEPOST LON13186, London EC1B 1AL. Or you can make a donation online using a credit card, debit card or CharityCard.

Please visit **[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/icanhelp](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/icanhelp)**

We're Action on Hearing Loss, the charity working for a world where hearing loss doesn't limit or label people, where tinnitus is silenced – and where people value and look after their hearing. We can't do this without your help.

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To find out more about what we do and how you can support us, go to [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

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### **Action on Hearing Loss Information Line**

Telephone **0808 808 0123**

Textphone **0808 808 9000**

SMS **0780 000 0360**

(standard text message rates apply)

Email [information@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:information@hearingloss.org.uk)

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